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FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4383
INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS ABIDJAN 000469

SENSITIVE

BT

FOR DS/IP/AF AND AF/W

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [AMGT](#) [IV](#)

SUBJECT: EAC MEETS TO DISCUSS PLANNED GENERAL STRIKE

Ref(s): a. Abidjan 467 b. Abidjan 452

11. (SBU) Summary: The Ambassador convened the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) on Wednesday, July 16, 2008, to review mission security and work posture following the announcement of a 2-day general strike beginning on Thursday, July 17, 2008 (ref a). The consensus of the EAC was that mission employees should be encouraged to remain at home on July 17 if transportation is unavailable although the Embassy will remain open and operational with staff who are able to make it to work. End Summary

The General Situation

12. (U) The EAC first reviewed relevant facts. The General Union of Workers of Cote d'Ivoire (Union Generale des Travailleurs de Cote d'Ivoire-UGTCI), the largest Ivorian confederation of unions, decided on Tuesday July 15, 2008, to stage a 2-day strike beginning July 17 to call for salary increases in line with recent increases in fuel prices (ref b). The UGTCI is a federation of more than 231 unions representing between 200,000 and 300,000 public and private workers nationwide.

13. (U) The call for a general strike follows a 3-day public transportation strike (July 14-16) by taxi and mini-bus drivers that was triggered by a steep rise in fuel prices. As of noon July 16, the threat of a general strike had prompted consumers to stock up on gas and groceries stores in anticipation of goods unavailable on Thursday and Friday; the result was massive queuing, especially at gas stations, that contributed to an atmosphere of heightened tension throughout the capitol. The UGTCI has warned that a strike could continue into next week if the government fails to take action. There are media reports that the presidency is in discussions with labor unions to resolve the strike.

14. (SBU) There has been remarkably little violence associated with the public transportation stoppage. The RSO had reports of a gas station being attacked in the Treichville area of Abidjan. There is widespread concern among mission employees, however, that in the event of a general strike, they could be harassed or impeded from trying to get to work. This concern is based on their experience from strikes in previous years during which citizens who ignored the call to strike were harassed.

Precautions for Embassy Employees

15. (SBU) It was the consensus of the EAC that the mission operate under a policy of liberal leave for the next 24 hours. Section chiefs agreed to identify essential personnel and ensure that transportation is available to them on July 17. There will be no/no curtailment of mission services.

16. (SBU) Additionally, each office will activate its section recall roster to ensure that there is a means to communicate with mission employees if the strike is resolved during the evening of July 16.

17. (SBU) As these precautions do not relate to a specific, credible or counterable security threat to Americans, the EAC deemed that no/no warden message was required for private American community; data currently available via the Consular Information sheet is

sufficient. Post will monitor the situation carefully and advise Department of any significant changes.

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